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ABSTRACT

This bibliography presents and analyzes selected books, articles, and sample learning materials on functional illiteracy in industrialized countries that are available in the library of the Unesco Institute for Education. Entries covering emerging areas of research, descriptions and analyses of country experiences and steps toward international cooperation have been classified into five major sections, some of which are subdivided. The five sections deal with the following topics: (1) literacy and illiteracy in industrialized countries--problem assessment; (2) functional competencies and employment; (3) awareness and action--some country experiences; (4) increasing access to the literate culture; and (5) international cooperation. Titles are cited in the language of origin. In a few instances, publications intended primarily for developing countries but applicable to industrialized countries have been included. Brief introductions to all chapters highlight significant ideas, controversial issues, and problems of ongoing research, reflecting the wide range of complex views expressed in the literature. (KC)

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FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY IN INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES: AN ANALYTICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ursula Giere

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FUNCTIONAL ILLITERACY IN INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES: AN ANALYTICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ursula Giere

This Bibliography is a Follow-up to the European Workshop on Functional Illiteracy in Industrialized Countries and the Integration of Youth into the World of Work, held at UIE, Hamburg, in December 1986. This Project has been sponsored by Unesco, Paris.

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   by E. Fuchs-Brüninghoff, W. Kreft and U. Kropp
   ISBN 92 820 10465

All edited by R.H. Dave, A. Quane and D.A. Perera

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FOREWORD

This bibliography arises out of the work of the Unesco Institute for Education (UIE), in close co-operation with Unesco and other agencies, in the field of identifying and mitigating functional illiteracy in industrialized countries.

Since 1980, the Institute has been working towards the eradication of illiteracy in developing countries, focusing its activities especially on post-literacy and the continuing education of neo-literates, but it has latterly extended its involvement to the matter of residual illiteracy and functional illiteracy in the industrialized world within the context of its concern for universal lifelong education and the improvement of the quality of life. In 1981 the Institute launched a series of case studies on post-literacy and continuing education in ten countries. The United Kingdom was selected from among the industrialized countries in this initial effort, and research was conducted in 1981-82 with the collaboration of Arthur Stock, then Director of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education for England and Wales. This study was extremely helpful in acquiring an understanding of the prevailing situation in this field in an industrialized country. Some preliminary findings of this case study were first published in an abridged form in *Prospects* in 1982, in the second issue for that year, and the full report appeared in 1985 as part of Volume 3 of UIE's series on Learning Strategies for Post-literacy and Continuing Education.

This exploratory work was followed up by a case study of literacy and functional illiteracy in the Federal Republic of Germany, which was undertaken in 1985 in collaboration with three Specialists of the German Adult Education Association (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband). This report, by Elisabeth

Fuchs-Brüninghoff, Wolfgang Kreft and Ursula Kropp, was published by the Institute in 1987 in English and French.

Yet another action started by UIE in 1983 was the identification and collection, for the Institute's own research and related activities , of sample learning materials aimed at acquiring and strengthening functional literacy. The Institute had started collecting and documenting a variety of other materials on this subject much earlier.

On the basis of these initiatives and other related activities, a workshop on functional illiteracy was organized by UIE, with the co-operation and sponsorship of Unesco Headquarters, Paris, for the European Region in December 1986. For this workshop, bibliographical references were provided by the International Bureau of Education, Unesco Headquarters and the Unesco Institute for Education. The present bibliography has been prepared as one of the follow-up activities. It is a compilation of literature on functional illiteracy in industrialized countries, based on the holdings of the library of UIE in 1987.

My sincere thanks are due to Ursula Giere at UIE for compiling the bibliography. I should also like to express my sincere thanks to my colleagues Imke Behr, Peter Sutton and Frauke Tesenfitz for their part in its production.

We extend our warmest gratitude to Unesco for providing financial support for the publication of this bibliography. The intimate involvement of Arthur Gillette from Unesco proved very valuable at different stages in its development. We also gratefully acknowledge the generous support given by other colleagues at IBE and Unesco, Paris.

The Unesco Institute for Education looks forward to continuing its work in combating functional illiteracy in industrialized countries over the coming years, and offers this bibliography as a contribution to the exchange of information in the spirit of co-operation and co-ordination within the region.

Ravindra H Dave
Director
Unesco Institute for Education

INTRODUCTION

This bibliography presents and analyses selected books, articles and sample learning materials on functional illiteracy in industrialized countries from the holdings of the library of the Unesco Institute for Education. Some of the publications mentioned could be acquired thanks to the bibliographical references supplied by the International Bureau of Education and Unesco Headquarters on the occasion of the "Workshop of Specialists in Europe on Prevention of Functional Illiteracy and Integration of Youth into the World of Work" (December 1986).

Entries, covering emerging areas of research, descriptions, and analyses of country experiences and steps towards international co-operation have been classified into five major sections, some of which are subdivided. Although overlap in the literature focusing mainly on either one or the other of these categories is obvious, it was not possible to expand the volume of the bibliography in such a way that all publications were quoted under all aspects they cover. The decision may sometimes seem arbitrary. Thus, more countries (e.g. Austria, New Zealand) are in fact covered than actually listed in the country section. On the other hand, some of the country studies or reports of international conferences cover certain aspects which could have been grouped topicwise in a problem oriented manner.

In some few instances, publications conceived primarily for developing countries but applicable to industrialized countries have been included (e.g. definitions, methods).

Brief introductions to all chapters highlight significant ideas, controversial issues and problems of ongoing research, reflecting the wide range of complex views expressed in the literature.

Authors', subject or geographical indices could not be elaborated.

The coverage may be imbalanced in terms of geographical as well as chronological distribution. A further imbalance arises out of the fact that although literacy activities in many countries

may be undertaken more often on informal grassroots levels than on institutionalized formal levels, the formal level is more dominant in the literature.

This bibliography is considered as a first step towards a more exhaustive coverage of this complex problem area. Indications of omission of significant and relevant publications are welcome.

Ursula Giere
Head, Documentation Centre
and Library

1. LITERACY AND ILLITERACY IN INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES: PROBLEM ASSESSMENT

1.1 The Formation of Literate Societies

The sociocultural process of interchange and interaction of western literacy was 'from its "invention" in the Greek alphabet and first popular diffusion in the city-states of classical times, formed, shaped, and conditioned by the oral world which it penetrated' (Graff, 1986, p. 69).

Eric Havelock reminds us (1976, p. 12):

> *The biological-historical fact is that homo sapiens is a species which uses oral speech,manufactured by the mouth, to communicate. This is his definition. He is not, by definition, a writer or reader. His use of speech, I repeat, has been acquired by processes of natural selection operating over a million years. The habit of using written symbols to represent such speech is just a useful trick which has existed over too short a time to have been built into our genes, whether or not this may happen half a million years hence. It follows that any language can be transliterated into any system of written symbols that the user of the language may choose without affecting the basic structure of the language. In short, reading man, as opposed to speaking man, is not biologically determined. He wears the appearance of a recent historical accident. ...*

For a long time after its invention literacy remained a tool used primarily by bureaucracy and state, trade and church which played vital roles in the process of spreading but at the same time restricting literacy to particular population groups. Only with the 19th century schooling movement as one in a number of infrastructures creating and sustaining mass literacy, reading and writing became compulsory skills for everyone. Since then literacy provision has been on the one hand associated with hegemony-creating functions for perpetuating established norms and values essential to the maintenance of social order and on the other hand with furthering collective cultural, political or economic action as well as individual access to the acquisition and creation of knowledge.

As a consequence of the written word penetrating into, integrating with, dominating over and finally pushing out the oral culture, individuals in present society find themselves forced to either acquire literacy skills to be able to function and have control over their lives or face obstacles and social stigma.

BARTOLI LANGELI, A.; PETRUCCI, A. (eds.): Alfabetismo e cultura scritta.
Bologna: Il Mulino 1978. 796 p.
(Quaderni storici. 38.)

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Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1985. 450 p.

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In: Taylor, Philip H. (ed.): Recent developments in curriculum studies. Windsor, Berkshire: NFER-Nelson 1986.
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In: Graff, Harvey J.: The labyrinths of literacy. London: Falmer Press 1987. pp. 162-186.

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(Monograph series. 14.)

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PATTISON, Robert: On literacy. The politics of the word from Homer to the age of rock.
New York: Oxford University Press 1982. 246 p.

RACHAL, John R.: Measuring English and American historical literacy. A review of methodological approaches.
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STEVENS, Edward: The anatomy of mass literacy in nineteenth-century United States.
In: Arnove, Robert F.; Graff, Harvey J. (eds.): National literacy campaigns. Historical and comparative perspectives. New York: Plenum Press 1987. pp. 99-122.

STOCK, Brian: The implications of literacy. Written language and models of interpretation in the 11th and 12th centuries. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1983. 604 p.

1.2 Being Illiterate in a Literate Environment

Diagnostic Examination of Societal and Economic Causes

The startling notion that mass schooling cannot necessarily be equated with literacy instigated a controversial discussion on the causes underlying this phenomenon. One or a combination of the following determinants have been examined:

1. Shortcomings of schools are being attributed to teaching methods (phonics vs. look-and-say, e.g. Flesch, 1981), learning materials (contextual irrelevance to students' lives, difference between the child's spoken language and the written language, Stubbs, 1980), teachers' approach to transmitting levels of cognition (decodings vs. comprehension), teachers' attitudes towards slow learners (discouraging vs. granting special attention) and the reading deteriorating effects of multiple choice tests (Wheeler, 1979) - altogether resulting in deterring motivation and furthering discrimination.

2. The reproduction of familial literacy patterns and of counterproductive parent-teacher relationships moulds children's out-of-school reading habits. Retaining and increasing reading ability require extensive reading practice. Children from low socio-cultural backgrounds in which little importance is ascribed to reading may thus be disadvantaged.

3. The impact of television and other electronic mass media on reading skills is interpreted both as a motivation and as a hindrance.

4. Learning difficulties arising from pupils' mental or physical handicaps, cultural conflicts (migrants), their environmental milieu or their teachers', parents' or classmates' attitudes contributing to a loss of interest in acquiring reading skills are often attributed to deficiencies intrinsic in children in this sphere.

5. Employers, when teaching literacy skills to their employees, usually focus on limited job specific functions, which could have a restrictive effect on the realization of wider objec-

tives of literacy (Harman, 1987).

Even though schools have been given the responsibility by society to transmit literacy skills it is recognised that in addition to the school a conglomerate of causes outside the purview of the school are responsible for the difficulties encountered in the endeavour to eradicate illiteracy. It is also seen that interlocking communal and societal frameworks outside the school should, on the one hand, create conditions conducive to the development and promotion of literacy, and on the other hand to eliminate detrimental conditions.

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(Studies in interactional sociolinguistics. 3.)

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Slough, Bucks: National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales 1968. 45 p.

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WHEELER, Thomas C.: The great American writing block. Causes and cures of the new illiteracy.
New York: Viking Press 1979. 189 p.

Individual Perceptions: Life Histories of Illiterates

Research into life histories of illiterates, so far mainly based on interviews with participants of literacy courses (not yet non-participants) from countries such as Belgium, Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and USA (e.g. ATD Quart Monde, 1983; Döbert-Nauert, 1985; Lire et Ecrire, 1985) reveals in-depth information on individual perceptions of determinants and psycho-social consequences of being illiterate in a culture that despises its members for not mastering the cultural techniques of reading and writing. This information should be taken into account when planning literacy provision, developing learning materials and attempting to erase public prejudice.

Although each life history depicts its very original individual fate, common patterns emerge: Illiterates, mostly originating from large families lacking even the most basic home literacy provision and struggling with economic, health, death and broken home problems or, as in the case of migrants or refugees, with cultural conflicts, add to their already predetermined outsider position the feeling of being classed inferior or mentally handicapped when they cannot cope with reading and writing skills after their first two years of primary education. Undergoing class repetition, placement in special schools, school-absenteeism, drop-out from vocational education without parental or teachers' care, their feeling of being rejected is reinforced throughout their youth often leading to restriction of social contacts and wariness towards institutions during adulthood. Avoidance of being confronted with their own incompetence, attempts to hide it and search for jobs where a minimum of or no reading and writing is required, result in the manifestation of a tendency and competence to consolidate and rely on symbols, shapes and colours and to depend on close friends or family members. Efforts to break this causal chain and to replace the familiar survival strategies by learning how to read and write are undertaken only under severe psychological or economic strain (e.g. loss of helping friends, loss of workplace), often at the risk of upsetting and losing established habits and dependence based networks (Funke/Jaehn, 1987). The delayed acquisition of

reading and writing skills, even though often initially accompanied by some feeling of relief, does not necessarily lead to application in situations urgently demanding these skills but may re-activate a sense of failure, anxiety and feelings of inferiority.

Almost all illiterates seem to share a combination of several of these life history elements. As diverse as the illiterate population group is - men, women, young and old, rural and urban, migrant workers, refugees, handicapped, itinerant people - so are the degrees to which its members are illiterate and develop self-esteem, build up social networks and cope with work situations. According to a study from an urban US setting

> *Many illiterate adults view reading and writing as only two of the many instrumental skill and knowledge resources that, combined, are required for daily life. Individuals create social networks ... so that it is unnecessary to develop every skill personally. Therefore, many illiterate adults see themselves as interdependent; they contribute a range of skills and knowledge other than reading and writing to their networks. Some illiterate adults see themselves as having little or nothing to offer their networks ... and may be viewed as dependent.* (Fingeret, 1983, pp. 133/4)

The ability of illiterates to hide away and to develop non-literate survival strategies twinned with societies' lack of adequate awareness and/or deliberate disregard are among the factors responsible for the late discovery of illiteracy in industrialized countries. Growing structural unemployment along with a changing concept and definition of illiteracy brought the phenomenon to the open.

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1.3 The Qualitative and Quantitative Dimensions

Definitions and Concepts

A definition of literacy and/or functional literacy acceptable to all industrialized countries neither exists nor is it desirable (whatever inconvenience this may mean for international comparison purposes) since literacy is a complex, interdisciplinary and relativistic skill, open-ended in terms of an individual's lifetime and aspirations as well as in terms of possible adaptations to changing times and environments, which should take into account as many factors as possible directly concerning the interests of the people who matter. Short-term approaches based on utilitarian considerations are adopted mostly by governments, other state authorities and employers while long-term broader objectives form the basis of the approaches advocated by humanist scholars and certain voluntary bodies.

The numerous definitions vary from pragmatic to idealistic depending on the extent to which they interpret, combine, stress and encompass interconnected notions and conceptual aspects which may be grouped under:

1) the core elements; 2) the contextual dimensions; 3) the predominant forces; 4) the operational objectives and 5) the standards.

1) At the core of literacy and/or functional literacy definitions are reading and writing (and - less explicitly mentioned - numeracy) ranging from purely mechanistic to multi-layered linguistic, psychological, sociological and epistemological skills. Different schools of thinking see reading either as an instrumental decoding process or as a process not divorcable from the content, including comprehension, reasoning, problem-solving, information and communication up to knowlege application and transfer or even knowledge creation. Writing, too, is regarded as either a mechanistic, a utilitarian or a creative identity forming skill.

2) Definitions differ in relating these core elements to one or several contextual dimensions. They emphasize historical, social, economic, psychological, cultural, ethical, aesthe-

tic or epistemological heritage and perspectives depending on demand and needs of a country, area, community, group of people, individual.

3) The contextual dimensions and the content orientation on which definitions focus reveal mostly the attitudes of predominant forces within societies towards e.g. determination of needs, distribution of knowledge, norms and conventions, stability (or change) of state, economic growth and development which do not necessarily coincide with the aspirations of the people concerned and may even come into conflict with the intentions and aspirations of the "silent culture" directed towards the active transformation of societies.

4) Consequently, the operational objectives such as the following mentioned in the definitions may be associated with different meanings, opinions and ideologies thus inheriting ambiguity and bias as for example: functionality, participation in civic life, self-realization, income generation, critical thinking, creativity, liberation, domestication.

5) The standards implied in the different definitions can be located on a continuum of capacities advancing in a spiral manner - from reading and writing one's name, a brief message, to achieving a particular reading age or completing a particular number of school grades and coping with daily life situations including those pertaining to the workplace, to comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and even creation of highly specialized or complex thoughts and ideas surpassing by far the domain of general education, perennially growing with the evolution of knowledge. The basic skills and the competence based approaches both measure the ability to apply certain identified skills that literate adults are supposed to possess as e.g. filling in forms, using the telephone directory and also, increasingly, work related skills.

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Statistics

Since no definition of literacy/functional literacy accepted by all industrialized countries exists, statistics on literacy from varying sources and times (including projections) should be viewed in the light of the continuous and society-specific evolution of the concept. Unesco suggests the following definitions for statistical (and thus international comparison) purposes:

I. Statistics of illiteracy

D e f i n i t i o n s

1. The following definitions should be used for statistical purposes:

(a) A person is literate who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life.

(b) A person is illiterate who cannot with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life.

(c) A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development.

(d) A person is functionally illiterate who cannot engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his own and the community's development.

(Unesco's standard-setting instruments, 1982, p. 4)

The latest issue of the Unesco Statistical Yearbook gives statistics for those industrialized countries where the problem of illiteracy had been recognized for a considerable period of time (e.g. Italy, Portugal, Spain), but it does not yet supply data for those countries where this problem has come to the surface only in the recent past (e.g. Federal Republic of Germany, France).

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2. FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCES AND EMPLOYMENT

Since structural unemployment played a vital role in bringing the phenomenon of functional illiteracy in industrialized countries to the surface, the link between the economy and literacy is either held firmly or examined critically in the literature.

The causes for structural unemployment are being sought in low skills, obsolete skills, lack of skills - on the part of the individual - or - in terms of societal trends - in the shift from manual to non-manual work, in the changing nature of jobs, in the evolution of new professions due to new technologies.

Advocates of the literacy-economy connection (mainly from US business)

1. claim that literacy is correlated with work performance, success and mobility (e.g. Duggan, 1985; Ritts, 1986; Functional literacy and the workplace, 1983), although research in this field does not clearly support a direct link between levels of workers' basic skills and job performance (Winterbauer, 1985; Sticht/Mikulecky, 1984).

2. conclude that a competitive technological economy requires in all positions workers with more sophisticated work competences in combination with highly job specific functional literacy capacities - restricting thus the literacy definition to short-term utilitarian purposes.

3. tend to blame schools for the failure to adapt/narrow curriculum to suit work specific societal changes (Harman, 1987) - as may be the practice in socialist economies - and develop business based, job specific adult literacy programmes to compensate for the 'deficit', often without much clarity about particular job specific literacy skills and without much knowledge of skill transfer thus running the danger of rendering themselves obsolete within a short time (Chang, 1983 and 1987). Research conducted in the area of specific literacy demands for individual occupations dates back to studies carried out within the army (see publications from e.g. Denmark, UK, USA),

a pioneer in the field of functional, job related literacy.

4. suggest that the economy is weakened by illiterates without giving concrete quantitative evidence about financial implications and consequences. Kozol (1985) estimates that the US economy loses many billions of dollars annually due to mistakes, low productivity, health and safety problems, inferior product quality, absenteeism and other effects of illiteracy.

Other writers, however, analyze the role of functional literacy in the economy in a different light. Elmore (1987, p. 165) states that 'Improving the functional and higher order skills of young people ... may simply result in employers raising their entry requirements, rather than more employment and mobility for young people ... Focusing more school time on subjects that have some presumed relationship to later occupation success may mean spending less time on culture, history, and critical thinking, which are requisites to informed political choice'. Harman (1987, p. 54) views the situation in a similar way: 'The supply of candidates with higher levels of schooling has so increased that employers have raised the ante for jobs. Supply has influenced demand'. And a look backwards to the industrial revolution, which may have some elements comparable to the technological revolution, reveals that 'Early industrialization was, first of all, disruptive to education, and adult literacy levels fell as a result ...,In the historical case,then, of English industrialization, there is good evidence to part from the company of those who must relate mass education directly to economic development' (Graff, 1986, p. 180).

In spite of the controversial assertions advocated in the theoretical discussion, practices in many industrialized countries prove that employers insist on considering illiteracy a selective handicap. Illiterate workers are being pushed to the margin. Literacy skills are regarded essential at four stages of the work process

1) job search
2) job application
3) job performance and
4) job mobility,

although still many jobs without a need for significant reading competence exist. The justification for not employing illiterates is often sought in health or labour legislation (Levine, 1987, p. 149).

In Hungary, however, 31 % of the labour force relies explicitly on oral communication (Terestyeni, 1987. p. 243).

The more technologically advanced and the more competetively structured a society is, the more it seems to depend and rely on elaborate work-geared adult basic skills or competency based programmes. The question - whether the in-built literacy component has a direct educational impact on work performance and productivity or rather a strong indirect socialization influence on discipline and adjustment capacities necessary for a compliant workforce - is relevant.

Another

> *question arises as to the impact of workplace education on families and communities, and through them on schools. This remains an unresearched area about which nothing definite can be stated. One might assume that the benefits gained by one member of a family from a company training program might inspire the younger members of the family with a new respect for learning and a desire to acquire literacy skills. It is likely, however, that many fail to draw the logical conclusions and that the transfer of attitudes from one environment to another is quite limited. What occurs in the workplace, seems to be regarded as limited to the workplace, with only minimal relevance for the family and the community. This is clearly an area that requires more investigation.*

(Harman, 1987, p. 56/7)

And yet another question is, what job specific literacy programmes may achieve if Diehm's prognosis (1984, p. 28) (for Australia) may come true:

> *Structural unemployment and the emergence of the 'non-working class'*
> *The projection has been made that, by the end of the present decade*
> *(i) up to 27 % of the potential workforce will be long-term or permanently unemployed; resulting from the introduction of high technology as much as from depressed economic conditions;*
> *(ii) 33 % of school leavers will not be regularly employed during the ten years after leaving school;*
> *(iii) for those in industrial employment, the average working week will not exceed 25 hours, with incomes being adjusted accordingly;*

(iv) a significant number of persons will not be employed during the whole of their working lives.

Also, it may be that as Levin and Rumberger (1985, quoted in Elmore, 1987, p. 160) project, 'the largest growth in jobs will occur in occupational categories with very low skill requirements and virtually no educational requirements beyond basic literacy and socialization to work.'

Whatever futurist visions materialize (or not), work specific functional literacy programmes may restrict, hamper or may even reduce to absurdity the broader objectives of literacy programmes unless

- they guarantee motivation and opportunities for skill transfer to the individual lives of those many workers who perceive their work as a self-alienating process;
- they are embedded in a social and cultural context linking literacy with, for example, sports and the arts;
- they appeal to a group including the non-working, the unemployed, housewives and family members.

Functional literacy provisions as conceived by the Italian union of metal workers (Moroni, 1981) may be an encouraging example in this direction.

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3. AWARENESS AND ACTION - SOME COUNTRY EXPERIENCES

3.1 Policy, Funding, Structure and Related Aspects

Until recent times illiteracy in most industrialized countries was perceived as a minor problem, restricted mainly to certain marginal groups such as mentally handicapped people and migrant workers originating from Third World countries or from countries which are traditionally accepted as having a high illiteracy rate (e.g. Greece, Italy).

The emergence of structural unemployment initiated a chain reaction of awareness of the existence and increasing numbers of functionally illiterate school leavers accompanied by shock, embarrassment and reluctant public acceptance generating - according to the heterogeneity of cultures, mentalities, economies, governments and hence priorities of the industrialized countries - (re)action with varying degrees of timing, resources and governmental involvement in policy, funding and structure concerning literacy provision.

The timing of the public awareness to the issue, the extent of this realisation and magnitude of the corrective measures worked out in response to the concerns vary considerably; hence the difficulty to elaborate an appropriate classification of the industrialized countries on the basis of their programmes and other patterns.

It is, however, commonly recognized that the United Kingdom was one of the first industrialized countries to start a massive campaign approach in the early 70s with governmental participation, followed by systematic approaches arising from initiatives of voluntary groups (e.g. Belgium, Canada, Federal Republic of Germany, Netherlands, USA). France and some Scandinavian countries provide ad-hoc programmes. Recognition has also been given to the problem in some Eastern European countries (Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia).

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3.2 Some Specific Aspects of Learning and Teaching

Methods

"Tell me, I'll forget
Show me, I may remember;
But involve me and I'll understand..."

Extensive discussion of pros and cons of various methods of teaching reading to adults is presented, for example, by Gray (1956) and Lerche (1985). They analyse approaches laying initial emphasis on either elements of words and their sounds (e.g. the alphabetic method, the phonic method, the syllabic method) or on the meaning of what is read (e.g. look-and-say, the phrase method, the sentence method, the story or language experience method). These once highly specialized methods have gradually lost their distinctive features as most adult literacy programmes apply a combination of several methods. Teaching writing and numeracy are often seen as component parts of reading. The choice of methods used is determined by

1. the form and structure of the written language. As Gray (1956, pp. 40-42) states:

The methods used in teaching reading differ in some respects owing to significant linguistic differences among the alphabetic languages. The extent of letter-sound correspondence varies considerably. This is strikingly illustrated in a comparison of the Spanish and Korean languages, in which there is a high degree of correspondence between letter and sound, with the English and French. ... A second difference relates to the fact that some alphabetic languages are more syllabic than others. Spanish, Portuguese and many ... languages are of the syllabic type. ... Obviously the necessary knowledge and skills, and the teaching techniques used to impart them, differ significantly from those required in languages in which the phonetic elements are learned and applied separately. There is wide agreement among authorities that teachers should, wherever possible, make effective use of syllabic units. ...
Summing up, all alphabetic languages make use of letter-sound characters in writing, but they vary radically in both form and structure. ... We may conclude, therefore, in

planning reading and writing programmes, a careful study should be made of the unique linguistic characteristics of the language to be used.

This point of view is also expressed in a more recent publication on functional illiteracy in the Federal Republic of Germany (Fuchs-Brüninghoff/Kreft/Kropp, 1986, p. 44):

... the experience of Central and Latin American countries as well as those of the United Kingdom and The Netherlands were a stimulating influence for the literacy campaign in the FRG. However, in view of the fact that dissimilarities existed in ... the linguistic situation, it was impracticable simply to adopt methods which had been used elsewhere.

2. the learner's needs, interests and experience.

There is no 'best' method. There are several good methods, each of which may be considered as 'best' in a given situation with certain individuals. ... Each adult has different goals, may be at different levels of ability. Any one of a variety of teaching methods may be effective. One method may be effective with one adult but not nearly as effective when used with another adult. (Cass, about 1970, p. 87)

Since adult learner groups are usually very heterogeneous, teaching in small groups (8-12 learners) is an essential prerequisite for meeting the individual learner's interest and needs and taking into account the person's experience and different levels of ability. The greater the involvement of the learning experiences with the learner's actual life situation, the higher is the chance of application of the newly acquired skills.

The most critical concern in selecting a method to use with adults in basic education classes is to select the one most effective for that particular group and for the individuals within that group. The method chosen must enable the learner to:

1. Desire to master the skills necessary to improve his relationships on the job, at home and in the community.
2. Stabilize and increase his confidence in himself and his ability to learn.
3. Develop, expand and raise his achievement level.
4. Develop comprehension and understanding of what he reads.
5. Realize the relationship of what he learns to his everyday life. (Cass, about 1970, pp. 83/84)

3. the characteristics of functionally illiterate adult learners. Adult learners may possess some or all of the following characteristics. They may:

1. *Be impatient learners, feel an urgency about learning.*
2. *Have very definite needs; high motivation; want to learn.*
3. *Have several goals and purposes in wanting to learn.*
4. *Need the satisfaction of successful achievement; goals within easy and quick reach.*
5. *Need praise and encouragement.*
6. *Like to be treated as mature adults; may be at varying stages of emotional and psychological maturity.*
7. *Have meny experiences and factual information to share.*
8. *Appreciate a friendly interest in them and their welfare.*
9. *Like to be comfortable; may want to make social contacts.*
10. *Be fearful of 'losing face' by participation in a learning situation.*
11. *Have had unpleasant experiences in former schooling days.*
12. *Tend to be extremely diffident and sensitive.*
13. *Experience strong feelings of frustration and futility.*
14. *Possess fixed habits and physiological handicaps.*
15. *Be distracted from learning by their personal problems.*
16. *Sincerely appreciate and respect the benefits of education/learning.*
17. *Expect too much of themselves and of their helper/teacher.*
18. *Expect to fail at learning.*
19. *Possess their own individual unique style of thought indicated by slowness (not to be mistaken for stupidity); this may indicate caution or a physical learner rather than a book learner.* (Cass, about 1970, pp. 46/47)

Methods applied may differ to certain degrees not only from country to country but also within countries. The less institutionalized adult literacy programmes are, the more flexible and less mechanistic they seem to be in their approach. The more competent a teacher is, the closer the teaching/learning methods will be suited to the learner's situation generating among teachers and students a relationship of authentic dialogue.

> *True dialogue unites subjects together in the cognition of a knowable object which mediates between them.*
> *If learning to read and write is to constitute an act of knowing, the learners must assume from the beginning the role of creative subjects. It is not a matter of memorizing and repeating given syllables, words, and phrases, but rather of reflecting critically on the process of reading and writing it-*

> *self, and on the profound significance of language.*
> *Insofar as language is impossible without thought, and language and thought are impossible without the world to which they refer, the human word is more than mere vocabulary - it is word-and-action. The cognitive dimensions of the literacy process must include the relationships of men with their world. These relationships are the source of the dialectic between the products men achieve in transforming the world and the conditioning which these products in turn exercise on men.*
> *Learning to read and write ought to be an opportunity for men to know what speaking the word really means: a human act implying reflection and action.*
> (Freire, 1975, pp. 29/30)

Methods of teaching literacy should encompass not only the mechanistic decodification ability of words and phrases but also the cognitive, psychological and social dimensions implying reflection and action.

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Examples of Printed Learning Materials

Closely linked with the methods applied is the production and selection of learning materials. While in many countries initial attempts had been made to use primary school textbooks in adult literacy programmes it was soon recognized that learning materials for adults had to take into account life experiences, situations and words of the adult world, both to avoid memories of frustrating school experiences and to increase motivation through a strong link with the realities of adult life and interest. In some countries (such as UK, USA) publishing houses or literacy institutions produce textbooks for adults, whereas in other countries (such as FRG and also UK) teachers and/or learners often prefer to develop their own materials. In the UK, for example, over a period of ten years adult learners and their tutors published a periodical paper in which they expressed their ideas and feelings as follows:

> *My name is Ann. I would like to say about when I first started going to find out about reading. No one could have been more nervous than I. I hid it up for so many years that I don't think many people did know, only family. I felt ashamed for what I couldn't do, but I was never taught. ... I am a person now more able to speak, more able to have a conversation, more able to speak up for myself instead of being in a shell. In our age group, many people have that problem, but I never realised it. But now I realise it by knowing, and learning, and reading, and listening.*
> (Write first time. Year 10 (1985), No. 1. p. 4)

Since it is impossible in this context to give an exhaustive overview of all the approaches and topics covered by the large amount of learning materials used in practice, a few selected materials representing 1) the mechanistic grammatical approach (Langenes) and 2) differing degrees of the learner-centered topical functional approach (how to cope with matters related to the post office, the train and shops or how to fill in various forms, etc.) are listed here.

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The Use of Mass Media and Libraries as Learning Strategies

Some industrialized countries have a long experience with television or radio programmes in teaching illiterate adults. In the USA, for example, "Streamlined English" was diffused in Memphis as early as in 1957 and as from 1960 also in Alabama. 'Operation Alphabet' was first broadcast in Philadelphia in 1961 and also in Florida in 1963.

The first and most impelling example of use of mass media in literacy programmes in industrialized countries on a national scale is the BBC's (UK) radio and workbook accompanied TV series 'On the move'.

Starting preparatory work in co-operation with governmental, regional and local authorities in the early 1970's the BBC initially produced fifty 10-minutes films which appeared from 1975 onwards and turned out to be a key element in broadening the literacy drive into a true national campaign. Since non-readers could not be contacted directly via print media, broadcasting made a unique contribution by reaching into the home teaching illiterate viewers at the most basic level of reading up to the point where they could join a literacy class or tutor.

The principle underlying the BBC project was that 'the most effective use of television would be in reducing anxiety and stigma, rather than in instruction'. Some of the main features (Hargreaves, 1980) were:

- a dual thrust, aimed at mobilising potential students as well as volunteer tutors;
- transmission of programmes during peak viewing hours rather than in the usual 'education' air-times, which demands that the programmes should be acceptable to the mass literate audiences amongst whom non-readers were concealed;
- recognition that 'educational' broadcasting was only one of the tools and that producers of "general" programmes should be persuaded to make common cause with the literacy objectives and introduce the messages in their own styles to their large audiences through such popular programmes as pop music and early evening current affairs.

Success and setbacks of this project are documented richly in the literature so that interested parties from other countries are in a position to examine possible adaptation of this large scale effort.

Against the background of increasing provision of adult literacy programmes public libraries (e.g. in Australia, UK, USA) became involved in local adult literacy schemes by, for example, supplying textbooks for tutors or materials for literacy students.

Modra, 1981 (in Tilley, 1984, p. 14), sees the library's role in literacy provision as that of a

> .... *communicator, coordinator, enabler and facilitator.* ...

> *The Apalachian Adult Education Center's project interrelating library and adult basic education services ... developed a model for achieving new patterns of service through community involvement and interagency cooperation. The project developed a theoretical base and methodology to assist the librarian and adult educator in developing literacy programs to achieve client-centered objectives as well as institutional goals.*
> (Lyman, 1979, in Tilley, 1984, p. 17).

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Evaluation

The literature available suggests that learner, programme and impact evaluation in the field of functional illiteracy in industrialized countries seems to be a rather untouched aspect. While in some countries (e.g. Canada, UK, USA) tests for learner evaluation have been elaborated and programme and impact evaluation is being undertaken in some ways, other countries (e.g. FRG) do not challenge the desirability of having a formal evaluation.

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Recruitment and Training of Personnel

> *Anyone who reads with a certain degree of competency can help others who read less well. This is the case regardless of age or previous educational training.*
> (H. Kohl: Reading, How To)

> *Experience has proved that Herbert Kohl's basic assumption is right but that the quality of that help is much improved with sound training.*
> (Training in adult literacy schemes, n.d. p. 2)

Qualification requirements of personnel teaching literacy skills to adults include abilities in and knowledge of

1. theory of written language;
2. theory of learning and didactic-methodological approaches;
3. social and psychological involvement and sensitivity;
4. organizational capacities.

Specialized basic professional training for adult literacy teachers does not seem to be widely institutionalized in industrialized countries. The practice is to recruit teaching personnel from other fields, often primary school teachers, adult educators or social workers with some additional specialized training.

While many countries, such as the Netherlands, UK and USA recruit volunteers as tutors, the German Adult Education Association (FRG) is opposed to this idea. Volunteerism in adult literacy schemes seems to be a controversial but, due to the cost-effectiveness and commitment involved, widely spread practice.

> *... volunteers are still on the front line of social progress, working on concerns not yet handled by institutions ... Volunteers have implemented social change in hundreds of areas, yet volunteerism to advance literacy is a fairly recent phenomenon.* (Kangisser, 1985, p. 3)

Current participation of youth in literacy work in some industrialized countries and many developing countries and its

possible extension and improvement are analysed by Gillette (1985). Senator Edward M. Kennedy (USA) recently announced the beginning of a 'national literacy corps', a scheme under which college and university students will give reading lessons in prisons, schools, adult literacy centres and agencies for handicapped and emotionally disturbed children (International Herald Tribune. 22 July 1987).

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Provision for Particular Groups of Learners: Women Migrants, Ethnic Minorities, Handicapped, Offenders

People being deprived from being in the mainstream of society constitute groups which for differing reasons are also marginal in the literacy world. This is true for women (in particular migrant or ethnic minority), migrants, ethnic minorities, the handicapped and offenders. Literacy provision suited to the special characteristics of these learner groups has been developed in many industrialized countries. However, immanent in some of these programmes is the predominant function of adjusting these people to utilitarian societal convenience and effectiveness. This is the case in particular with migrant workers to whom strictly work oriented literacy courses are offered in languages other than their mother tongue, which is regarded either as a means of protecting them from or of exposing them to exploitation (Castanheira/Ladji, 1974).

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3.3 Public Information and Awareness Raising: Some Examples

Organizing publicity for combating functional illiteracy may have the following features (see also: Suggestions for organizing local publicity. Dublin: NALA n.d.):

1. Raising public awareness and understanding. Newspapers, radio and television programmes (examples: BBC's 'On the move' (UK), NDR's TV spots (FRG)), leaflets, posters or exhibits in libraries or shopping centres may be possible means of dissemination of information focusing on causes of the problem and on functionally illiterate adults' perceptions of their situation.
2. Campaigning for resources and funding. People to approach include: politicians, trade unionists, social workers and church leaders.
3. Literacy provision and recruitment of learners. This may preferably be done on a local level through, for example, community and health workers and notices in shops or health centres to reduce risks of raising expectations without adequate provision to deal with the demand.

Some few selected examples of newspaper articles and other publications from Canada, France, FRG, UK and USA may illustrate in what different ways the issue is being publicized.

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(Zur Theorie und Praxis der Alphabetisierung. 4.)

KENNEDY reveals plan for "Literacy Corps".
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In: Neue Zürcher Zeitung. No. 255 (2./3. Nov. 1984.) p. 7.

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4. INCREASING ACCESS TO THE LITERATE CULTURE

> *What would happen, if the whole world would become literate? Answer: not so very much, for the world is by and large structured in such a way that it is capable of absorbing the impact . But if the whole world consisted of literate, autonomous, critical, constructive people, capable of translating ideas into action, individually or collectively - the world would change.*
> (Galtung, J. in Graff, H.J.: The labyrinths of literacy. London: Falmer 1987. p. 38)

The fact that a certain percentage of the population of industrialized countries may be called functionally illiterate does not imply that the rest are literate in the above mentioned sense.

Industrialized societies are based on the cultural techniques reading, writing and numeracy. Each member of society has to acquire, practice and use these 'man-invented' skills which brought about the possibility for communication, distribution and application of knowledge over time and distance, linking cultures and peoples - to participate in or evoke individual or societal and cultural action.

Written language is coded oral communication. Breaking the code is a painful experience for some; a challenging endeavour for others. While it may lead some to anxiety and frustration, it may show others the way to self-realization and emancipation in many respects.

> *The book is a passport to the world, breaking through the barriers of time and space, proferring the joy of fulfilment. It can be a faithful companion, a spinner of dreams, or a source of wisdom, at the choice of its user. For it is this freedom of choice both of subject and of objective that makes the printed word unique among the means of communication.*
>
> *In man's effort to communicate, two imperatives are posed: to record thought and then to have the possibility of reconstructing the idea in its original form. The first partial*

solution came through painting, sculpture and, finally writing. (Books for all, n.d., p. 5)

The act of reading itself seems to inherit a process that demands capacities for selection and comprehension of content, for conclusion and correlation of concepts - prerequisites necessary to generate and translate into action individual and societal innovative ideas, attitudes, decisions.

... today reading research has defined the act of reading in itself as a multi-level mental process which contributes greatly to the development of the intellect. Great demands are made on the brain by the process of transforming graphic symbols into intellectual concepts ... Combining thought units into sentences and larger language structures is both a cognitive and a language process ... reading is an exemplary form of learning. Psychological studies have shown that improvement in the ability to read also leads to improvement in learning ability as a whole, going far beyond mere reception. Good reading is critical confrontation with the material and the ideas of the author. At a higher level and with longer texts, the comprehension of relationships, of construction or structure, and interpretation of the context, becomes more significant. If the new material is brought into relationship with already existing conceptions, critical reading is apt to develop into creative reading, a sythesis leading to completely new results.

Reading is one of the most effective means of systematic development of language and the personality. Work on the language is work on man. (Bamberger, 1975, p. 7)

Or, expressed in the words of Scribner and Cole:

As literacy shapes culture, the argument goes, so it shapes human minds. A simple version of this argument appeals to the growth of the mind that results from the assimilation of knowledge and information transmitted by written texts. More radical is the claim that mastery of a written language affects not only the content of thought but also the processes of thinking - how we classify, reason, remember. According to this view, writing systems introduce such basic changes in the way individuals think that we are justified in speaking not only of literate and preliterate societies but of literate and preliterate people.
(The psychology of literacy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1981, p. 4/5)

Certainly, reading is not and has never been the only avenue to learning, information gathering, communication, individual or collective creativity and action. The right to read, however, is a democratic right that should be promoted. Surveys of reading habits; groupings of reading purposes; analyses of reading motivations and the impact book production and libraries have on it; and investigations of print media within the context of other media, including new technologies - are among the subjects raised in publications on the promotion of reading, leaving many questions unanswered or open to interpretation.

It seems to be generally accepted, however, that the models of reading found within a family may influence the reading habits of children which will be further moulded by the kindergarten, the school and, above all, by the encouragement received from the value system of the culture in which a person lives.

The promotion of reading has to be integrated with the oral tradition as well as with audio-visual mass media and has to encompass all aspects and aspirations of life. Thus, short-term utilitarian approaches to literacy restricting themselves to make people functional in one regard or the other may hamper this goal:

> *Among the many issues surrounding the problems of both illiteracy and functional illiteracy, two are especially noteworthy in relation to the concept of the human gap. The first is ... the impetus to create especially the type of literacy that could spark social participation and change is lacking in all but a few cases. Many of those in power are afraid to face the changes, and the rise in expectations, which would result from expanded literacy. This lack of political will is an illustration of how the refusal to use available power can lead to waste in learning.*
>
> *The second issue concerns the current conventional criteria for literacy. Is "literacy" to be understood purely and simply as the ability to read and write? Again the distinction between maintenance and innovative learning is marked. Whereas maintenance learning, with its stress on language, equates literacy with reading and writing, innovative learning encompasses a basic competence in all the elements of learning within the framework of literacy. In innovative learning, the stress is on the value or ethical dimension of literacy, not unlike those concepts of literacy that focus on raising consciousness and increasing the capacity to participate ef-*

fectively and productively in society. The illiteracy at issue here concerns those people in the developed and developing countries alike who are evidently incapable of comprehending simple ethics.
(Botkin, J.W.; Elmandjra, M.; Malitza, M.: No limits to learning. Oxford: Pergamon 1979. pp. 74/75)

Throughout the history of written symbols only a relatively small but stable group of a given society were constant readers and hence

... claims of a literacy crisis may be misconceived ... we contend that reading and writing per se are secondary concerns in mass literacy campaigns, and that the primary purpose of institutionally transmitted literacy is rather the noncoercive creation of a shared sociocultural worldview: the construction and dissemination of a dominant national ideology. Accordingly, we want to argue that the alleged literacy crisis can be reconsidered as a sociocultural crisis, mistakenly described in terms of falling standards of reading and writing.
(Castell, 1987. p. 414)

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5. INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

International co-operation among industrialized countries on problems of functional illiteracy has a relatively short history. Here are some of the landmarks:

In 1976 the Council of the European Communities passed a resolution on measures to combat illiteracy in the Member States.

One of the first international seminars in this context was organised jointly by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, the British Council, the National Institute of Adult Education (all UK) and the International Council for Adult Education (Toronto). Lire et Ecrire (Belgium) organised a conference for participants from many industrialized countries in 1984, followed by an International Conference taking place at the University of Oldenburg in 1985. In 1986 Unesco jointly with the Unesco Institute for Education held the first workshop of this kind for the whole European Region (including per Unesco definition Israel and Canada), i.e. for Eastern and Western Europe. The final report of this workshop suggests the following forms of international co-operation:

1. among industrialized countries;
2. among industrialized countries and developing countries (since the strategies adopted in Third World countries may be relevant, particularly for migrant population of foreign origin);
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